

**Statement of Senator Daniel K. Akaka
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs**

**Nomination of Paul A. Schneider to be
Under Secretary for Management
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
December 6, 2006**

Today we are here to consider the nomination of Mr. Paul Schneider to be the Under Secretary for Management at the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). However, before we turn to Mr. Schneider's nomination, I would like to thank you, Chairman Collins, for your work over the past four years as Chairman to ensure the success of DHS. I appreciate your dedicated leadership and the comity with which you have led this Committee. I look forward to working with you in the next Congress.

I am pleased to join you today in welcoming Mr. Schneider to the Committee. The position to which he has been nominated is pivotal – perhaps even more important than the Secretary's job because the Under Secretary has line responsibility for ensuring the Department performs its mission. Merging 22 agencies with 180,000 employees into a department to carry out a common mission is the single biggest challenge in the government today.

As the ranking member of the Oversight of Government Management Subcommittee and the Armed Service Readiness Subcommittee, I know that without sustained leadership neither incremental changes nor wholesale transformation will be integrated into an agency's management culture. That is why I have sponsored legislation with Senator Voinovich to create a Deputy Secretary for Management at DHS, which I believe will help the new department avoid the same long-term management problems currently plaguing the Department of Defense.

Mr. Schneider, you will be coming into an agency with deep divisions between labor and management, most of which stem from the personnel regulations issued by DHS last year that I believe will severely erode employee rights and protections. Strong employee protections enhance security by helping attract and retain the most skilled employees and by ensuring that they feel free to bring concerns about management actions that could adversely affect our national security to senior leaders without fear of retaliation.

I urge you to work with the DHS Chief Human Capital Officer (CHCO), who I know from her tenure at the Office of Personnel Management, and with union leaders, management associations, and the Senior Executives Association to develop a personnel system for the Department that is flexible, transparent, and ensures collective bargaining and a fair appeals process.

I want to mention an issue that came up during the Committee's work on your nomination concerning your stewardship of a classified program at the National Security Agency called Trailblazer. We have examined this issue in both open and closed briefings, and there is nothing

that we have discovered which should adversely affect your nomination to this position.

Mr. Schneider, you have a reputation and a record of getting things done, of hiring and rewarding capable people, and supporting them in their mission. Your talents are sorely needed given the critical roles played by and challenges facing the Chief Information Officer, the Chief Procurement Officer, the Chief Financial Officer, and the CHCO – all of whose offices fall under the Management Directorate. I hope you will not hesitate to reach out to the Committee should problems arise.

Thank you again Madam Chairman.